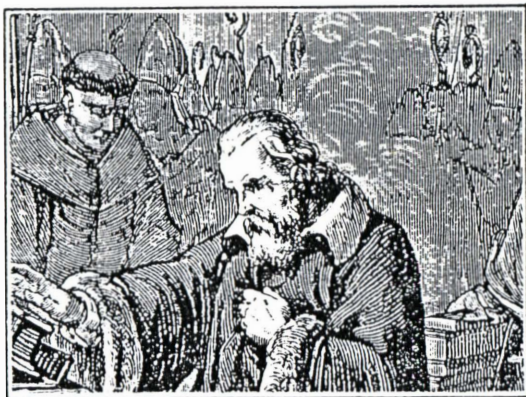


magonia



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Letters & Reviews & Columns

Magonia is an independent journal devoted to a broad examination of anomalous phenomena, and their interaction with society and the individual. It is published independently by the Editors, and has no connection with any other magazine or group. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily shared by the Editors.

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From the Underworld

Kevin McClure begins an exploration of the world of small magazines

WAY back when, in the days of Common Ground, one of its most popular features, and the one I most enjoyed compiling too - was the Journal Listings and Reviews. I have long believed that the life-blood of thought and communication in the paranormal field is the little journals, magazines and pamphlets, that can quickly reflect current thought, find room for discussion, respond to events and discoveries, all in a way that books seldom can.

As the number of books of all kinds relating to our interests - be the books serious, or trash - diminish in frequency and availability (where can you find imported UFO books these days?), the role of our underground press becomes increasingly important so, developing on a suggestion from our illustrious Editor, here is 'From the Underworld'. A new, ongoing survey, with a slight twist.

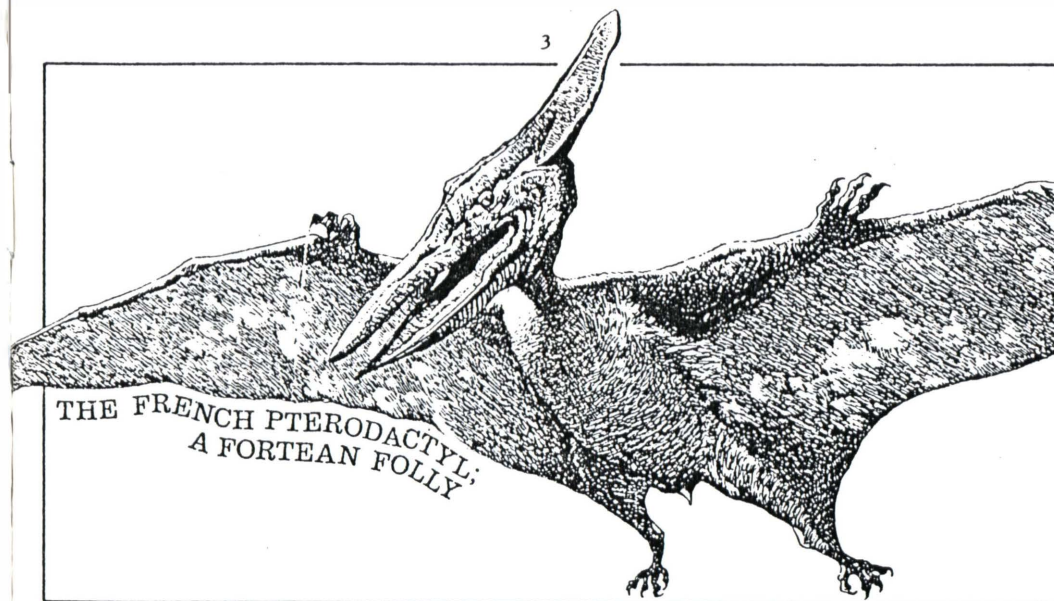
The twist is that whereas with Common Ground, apart the oddments included for humorous or vituperative reasons, the journals listed remained largely the same; respectable, useful and widely available. This time I'm not going to stop when reaching the borders of either respectability or sanity. Starting with two popular occult magazines - the November editions of Fate and Prediction; one wide-circulation UFO magazine - Jenny Randles' Northern UFO News; together with

three more esoteric items purchased one recent afternoon in London, of which more in a moment - I'll send for everything I can reasonably afford from anywhere in the world. With the one proviso that it relates in some apparent way to the experience of the paranormal, be that in terms of magic, craft, spontaneous phenomena, receipt of information by paranormal means, related abilities, related political or religious movements, et al. And I'll report back on the results in each issue of Magonia, the while looking to compile some sort of overall listing that may be of use to other researchers. Indeed, if there's sufficient demand I'll make regular listings available in return for an SAE.

The three more abstruse items this time are all British, all quite literate and intelligently written, and all from the Paganism/Magic area of experience. First, The Pipes of PAN, the journal of Pagans Against Nukes, no. 21, Samhain 1985. This is available at £2.50 p.a. for 4 issues (at each Fire Festival), and is a logical mix of concern for the Earth and the propagation of the pagan relationship with it, together with poetry, personal experiences, reviews and some neat illustrations. Sort of Paganism for 'Guardian' readers.

Secondly, Round Merlin's Table, Summer Issue, no. 68. This is available for £2 p.a. from

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MICHAEL GOSS

WHEN Professor Challenger wanted to prove to zoological sceptics that pterodactyls weren't extinct after all, he merely arranged an expedition to an unknown plateau in the Matto Grosso and caught one. The sight of the gargoyle-faced nightmare filling London's Queens Hall with the "dry, leathery flapping of its ten-foot wings" and with a "putrid and insidious odour" as it circled overhead left Challenger's enemies in no doubt: the pterodactyl tribe most certainly was not extinct!

BUT of course this was only a fictional scene in a novel: the climax to the evocatively-titled The Lost World by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. And as Challenger's pterodactyl quitted the Queens Hall via an inadvertently open window and was last seen over the Atlantic apparently homing towards South America, we've two good reasons for not seeing it in any museum. But what possible explanation can there be for the amazing absence of the French pterodactyl?

The French Pterodactyl - let us use that term rather than the more general 'pterosaur' that is applied today - was, in the words of the Illustrated London News for 9 February 1856, a "discovery of the greatest scientific importance". This value judgement did not prevent the report from

being relegated to an obscure corner of the weekly where it could have been easily missed. Those who did not miss it learned the following.

Workmen engaged in cutting a railway tunnel through the Liassic rocks at Culmont, Haute Marne were breaking up an enormous block of stone when "from a cavity in it they suddenly saw emerge a living being of monstrous form.

"This creature, which belongs to the class of animals hitherto considered to be extinct, has a very long neck, and a mouth filled with sharp teeth. It stands on four long legs, which are united together by two membranes, doubtless intended to support the animal in the air, and are armed with four claws terminated by long and crooked talons. Its general form resembles that of a bat, differing only in its size, which is that of a large goose. Its membranous wings, when spread out, measure from tip to tip three metres, twenty two centimetres. Its colour is livid black; its skin is naked, thick and oily..."

Few modern readers would have trouble tying this French 'discovery' in with the prehistoric creature that Conan Doyle (just over half a century later) depicted turning a zoological meeting into a near riot. In case some Illustrated London News readers were

not so well up in recent zoological researches - and especially those concerning the fossilized oddities of remote antiquity - the reporter made things a good deal easier for them:

"On reaching the light this monster gave some signs of life, by shaking its wings, but soon after expired, uttering a hoarse cry. This strange creature, to which may be given the name of a living fossil, has been brought to Gray, where a naturalist well versed in the study of palaeontology, immediately recognised it as belonging to the genus *pterodactylus anas*."

With a pertinent reminder that the sedimentary strata holding this unique relic dated it at "more than one million years", the article ends. The epoch making specimen had become the property of Science, leaving its discoverers with only the mute testimony of that cavity in the stone block it had but lately filled with airtight precisions. Today we have even less evidence of the famous French Pterodactyl; for all the use Science appears to have made of it, the thing may as well not have existed. Which is only to be expected, because the French Pterodactyl did not exist.

More miraculous than the preservation of the Culmout anomaly is the way in which the story surrounding it has survived the eroding powers of time. From a secluded end-of-page slot in a Victorian weekly it has become a Fortean classic, a favourite of the 'Amazing Unexplained Mysteries' school. Writers hard pressed for material are prone to resurrect the Pterodactyl as mercilessly as the tunnel-builders in the original *Illustrated London News*.

In some ways the reluctance shown by both writers and readers to discard the story is wholly comprehensible. We want to believe in the kind of Lost World called forth in Conal Doyle's novel and in the films based on that powerful motif. We want to reatin the merest sliver of hope that somewhere the prehistoric monsters of our childhood reading may be holding out in spite of the scientists' disbelief. Any evidence is avidly seized upon, be it a reported sighting of a saurian in West Africa or the lesson of the coelacanth. If a fish that was already old when the first dinosaurs were born could survive and remain unknown as a living form until as late as 1938 - can't we entertain hopes for the still more exciting creatures we've grown up with since our infant reading days?

The skies of this Lost World of printed page and cinema screen would be strangely empty without the snaggle-toothed, bat-

caped animals we know as pterodactyls. They are among the best- or most widely-known members of the prehistoric menagerie and among the first to be discovered, scientifically named and studied. Even as early as 1843 a by no means credulous naturalist like Edward Newman, editor of *The Zoologist*, could ponder on the mysteries of these animals which he rather defensively liked to think of as "marsupial bats". Modern researchers would hardly blink at propositions which Newman admitted were not only controversial for his time, but unlikely to sway zoologists from the opinions of palaeontological heavyweights like Cuvier and Buckland. He correctly guessed that 'pterodactyles' were a large and diversified group encompassing insect-eaters, fish-eaters and meat-eaters. His theory that they may have been clothed in hair has apparently been borne out in one case and appears likely to apply to many more, if not to all; he also seems to have been moving towards the position held by many today that the pterosaurs were warm-blooded animals. But how many would go along with his gently-dropped bombshell:

"I merely hint as a matter of surmise... that the race may yet probably exist; that representatives of the fossil pterodactyles may yet be found amongst the bats that abound within the tropics. Species or even genera become extinct, but it rarely happens that a vast group like the pterodactyles is wholly lost, and left without a representative".

If this article had not fixed its sights on one celebrated report of a pterosaurian survivor a good deal closer to home than the tropics, some fascinating material that goes part-way to justifying Newman's outrageous idea could be analysed. The native traditions from various parts of Africa might be examined; the 'Pteranodon' sightings half buried inside a spate of 'Big Bird' reports from Texas in early 1976 would be spotlighted. Not least interesting amongst these was the circumstantial account of the three San Antonio elementary-school teachers interviewed by Fate's Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman [1]. It seems doubly strange that such sightings of what had formerly been called the largest Pterosaur known to science should come so close in time and space to the announcement of the fragmentary remains of a new and even larger specimen discovered at Big Bend National Park in the same state. (With an overall estimated wingspan of up to 39 feet, *Quetzalcoatlus* represented a genuine upstaging of Pteranodon's 26 feet. Both make the French Pterodactyl of 1856 seem insignificant at a miserly ten-foot-plus from tip to tip!)

But it may be more profitable to concentrate on pterosaurs and the Victorians. In the intellectual climate of their period - in the very language of that period - is the key to the fact that the French Pterodactyl could only have been a playful hoax.

The Victorians had a profound respect for Science with a capital S: not purely for its practical applications, but in the abstract too. It thus meant the creation of an atmosphere of 'seriousness' in which the foundations of many 20th Century sciences were laid, it also bred a suspicion that academicism was taking too much of the wonder out of life. The often pedantic and dogmatic tone of many scientists - an intol-

UNDERWORLD - from page 2

The Servants of Light, PO Box 215, St. Helier, Jersey, CI. Based in Quabbalistic magic (the best kind, in my uninformed opinion - it has a charm and sense to it, lacking in most other traditions), it's grossly duplicated, but has nice articles on Arthurian Themes in Science Fiction, and 'Sharing My Life with Dryads'. I also like the Editor's description of Live-Aid as "an act of magic in its fullest sense".

Formoas - A Periodical of the Occult Arts describes itself as an 'occultzine', and is well produced with quality line illustrations with an overall commitment to A.O.Spare. An emphasis on practical - mostly Quabbalistic - magic, and analysis makes this a good journal for the newcomer. The edition I have is vol.1, no.4, and it costs £5 p.a. (4 iss.) from Sothis Publishing, C/O Technique Studio, Unit A10, Hi-Tech House, 10 Blackfriars St., Norwich.

At a rough guess I think I have 35-40 more publications to send for, most of which I have not seen before, and I'll let you know of my progress early in the new year. I reckon some interesting ideas and beliefs should come to light, and some interesting people and experiences, too: all grist to the Magonian Mill, to the pursuit of the fringes of human experience. Of course, if you publish a journal that falls in our field of interest, I'd be grateful to receive it, or at least details of how I can pay you for one. If you know of something I shouldn't miss, please tell me about it.

Finally, please remember the point I used to make in *Common Ground*. The most rewarding aspect of editing a small magazine is to have people buy and read it, and the best most editors can hope for financially is not to have to spend too much of their own money subsidising their own publications. Make an editor happy - send for a magazine or two!

erance towards anecdotal evidence from unqualified observers, for example - was also offensive to outsiders. One way of evening the score was to perpetrate hoaxes which took in (or burlesqued the manner of) these self-appointed experts.

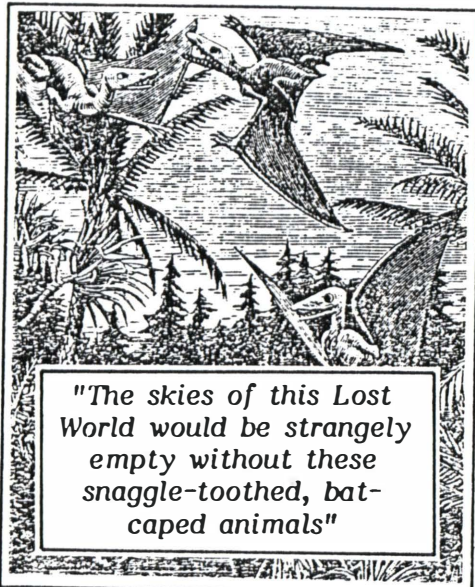
No area of science at this juncture was more fluid than zoology. By 1856 there were still discoveries to be made, exciting new animals amongst them. Palaeontology was still a developing and controversial field; Owen had only coined the term 'dinosaur' as recently as 1841 and the major percentage of large, sensationally-bizarre prehistoric animals with which we populate our own visions of primeval landscapes would remain unknown for another 30 years. Above all, these sciences had not yet reached a point where the observations of intelligent but untrained amateurs were totally excluded.

So on the one hand there was the optimistic hope that new forms were to be discovered and on the other a growing rigidity of scientific attitude which stated that the opinions of the professional scientist could not be contested. In this climate any incident which restored the sense of wonder by contradicting the dogmatism of the experts assumed huge importance. It is no coincidence that some of the most ambitious hoaxes which found their way into the early-Victorian publications featured some aspect of zoology.

As the opinions of Edward Newman indicate, the pterosaurs were a legitimate object of speculation. For all practical purposes they were scarcely known in 1856 and the ones which attract most attention today - Pteranodon, for instance - were still buried in the rocks. The first, discovered in c.1784 and properly described by Cuvier in 1801, came from the fine lithographic limestone of Solnhofen in Bavaria which was to become famous as the cenetary of these 'flying reptiles'. Dimorphodon, a cumbersome looking pterosaur whose appearance seems to have influenced Conan-Doyle's impressions of what pterodactyls looked like, was found at Lyme Regis by England's famous fossil-hunter Mary Anning in 1828. However the public did not see reconstructions of it until almost 50 years later. Popular awareness of what a prehistoric animal was supposed to have looked like is of crucial significance, as we'll consider in a moment.

To the annoyance of most professional zoologists and palaeontologists, the fossilized evidence of the prehistoric world led encouragement to certain 'irrational' beliefs that they could well have done without. Most patent of these was the hypothesis that perhaps the great saurians were not a memento of bygone days but the living, breathing answer to certain conundrums that men

of science had signally failed to explain. The Great Sea Serpent was less an object of derision if you presented it as a plesiosaur that had survived for millions of years in the deep and unexplored ocean. And if reptilian monstrosities were being unearthed in the world's quarries, was it not just possible that the tales of living toads found immured in blocks of stone or coal - a phenomenon reliably reported by numerous observers, it seemed - were far less unlikely than zoologists would admit-



The infuriated scientists shouted "No!" to both propositions, yet the propositions would not go away. As late as 1915, E. Ray Lankester - the man whose popular lectures and book on *Extinct Animals* (1906) had done so much to inform laymen on what the prehistoric menagerie looked like in the flesh - was still combatting the idea that toads-in-stone were marvellously preserved survivors entombed when their 'prisons' were laid down millenia ago. Lankester was the "gifted friend" whose "excellent monograph... the standard work" was acknowledged by Professor Challenger (and hence by Conan Doyle) in *The Lost World*, but he was no friend of the 'prehistoric survivor' theory. Having forcefully pointed out that these imprisoned amphibia had not even evolved when the sediments and coal measures said to contain them were laid down, he styled the concept as worthless as:

"...the similar but perhaps bolder statement indulged in from time to time by an inventive transatlantic Press... that

some workmen blasting a rock in quarries at Barnumsville were astonished by the escape from a cavity within the solid rock of a large flying lizard or pterodactyl which immediately spread its wings and flew out of sight." [2]

Several Fortean writers have shared Lankester's belief that a connection exists between toads-in-stone stories and the French (and possibly other?) pterodactyl(s); but not his conclusion on the invalidity of those accounts. If we choose to disagree with him, however, we have to concede it sheerly amazing that the unique specimen identified so positively by the "naturalist well-versed in the study of palaeontology" is not the star exhibit in some world-famous collection. As far as the *Illustrated London News* report goes, it did not spread its wings and fly out of sight, as per Lankester, but it should have been available for study and acclaim. Only it most clearly wasn't. Inconceivable thought - could someone have ... mislaid it?

"People don't stumble upon enormous discoveries and then lose their evidence", Tarp Henry cautions Malone, when he mentions that Prof. Challenger lost a freshly-deceased pterosaur carcass in a boat accident, "Leave that to the novelists." But supposing we could accept that evidence - including French Pterodactyls - can on occasions go missing. The story contains enough errors to destroy its own credibility even so.

Taking the *Illustrated London News* account as a starting point, a modern-day palaeontologist would frown with bewilderment at the description of the French Pterodactyl. As a journalistic attempt it might pass muster, but as a scientific guide to the animal it is hopeless - and the few details emerging from it are very ambiguous. The size ("which is that of a large goose") and wingspan ("ten feet plus") make it sound suspiciously larger and hence more dramatic than any specimen completely known at the time, but they are not beyond the realms of belief [3]. "Naked, thick and oily skin", however is a lot less likely; it would have provided no insulation against heat-loss in flight. Back in 1856, though, 'pterodactyles' were always depicted in reptilian nudity because no-one had yet found evidence to support the widely held modern view that some kind of hair or down covered their bodies.

These complaints aren't simply academic trivialities. The French Pterodactyl does not sound right for our times because the animal it describes doesn't match the picture we have of pterosaurs. But it is perfect for the picture of pterosaurian morphology

that prevailed at the time the account was written. The typical pterosaur of the 1850's was a repulsive combination of bird, bat, lizard and medieval dragon - a gargoyle come to life. The loathsomeness of this unappetizing blend was stressed at every opportunity till it attained an almost metaphysical dimension, with added disgust arising from the indecent nakedness of the monster. This is the pterosaur described by the *Illustrated London News's* man in France: not a real impression of an actual living creature, but a mechanical attempt to reproduce a standard (and to us anachronistic) portrait conforming with readers' expectations. But the errors caused by the attempt to translate into words the popular imagery of the day do not stand in isolation when we examine certain literary/artistic standards of the society that produced the report.

As fitted one of the 'golden ages' of popular literature, early Victorians had keen ears for language and (perhaps even more so!) an eye for double meanings to words. Puns - many of them too dreadful, forced or elaborate for our taste - proliferated; in certain circumstances they were held to be the height of witticism. With the same grand catholicism that could be found in most areas of 1850's life and culture, readers loved not just the puns that only a classically-educated person could be expected to construe, but likewise ones based on slang and street-talk.

For a researcher in the 1980's this kind of playing upon words can be an etymological maze. The sense of a joke may depend on some piece of slang which has been defunct for over a century and therefore almost as unintelligible as Martian. Classical puns may be less formidable to a student of Latin or Greek, but even there no defence exists against the 'macaronic' pun where the double meaning is at one or more stages removed, perhaps from one language to another, via a third.

The French Pterodactyl account contains clues illustrative of all kinds of Victorian punology. There is a straightforward slang pun and a Latin pun leading into the convoluted two-language 'macaronic' variety. In fact, the main clue depends heavily on a subtle movement from Latin to French and thence to contemporary slang - not an easy process to anticipate as you read a purportedly-authentic newspaper report!

In his *Strange Creatures from Time and Space* (1975) John Keel has outlined the ingenious suggestion that the motive behind the Culmout may have contained a flavour of nationalistic pride: a hoax to put France's old rivals across the Rhine

into the shade. Quite likely recent finds at Sölnhofen and the burgeoning fame of that South German site may have given some Frenchmen grounds for jealousy. Nor is it impossible that some Gallic hoaxer decided to go a giant step beyond Germany's stony remains of pterosaurs by offering the savants something far better - the tantalizing hint of a living one. Even so, he or she had a perfect understanding of the kind of linguistic wizardry required to 'sell' the story to the British newspapers. Despite the French news agency credited at the end of the *ILN* report, this could have been a quite 'British' affair, with clues inbuilt to entertain the cognoscenti who were so vulnerable to the challenge of these punning games.

Few of the books which have lifted the story verbatim from the *ILN* bother with the original title to the piece: "Very Like a Whale". In choosing this pithy piece the magazine wasn't quoting Hamlet gratuitously, but letting everybody know how they felt about the veracity of the story. Then as now, British readers knew that a 'whale' of a story was a 'whopper', something too big to be swallowed (i.e. believed). And the complete phrase was, by the 1850's, applied liberally to anything considered to be far less than probable. That was how the *ILN* regarded the French pterodactyl; no doubt readers were expected to take it in the same spirit.

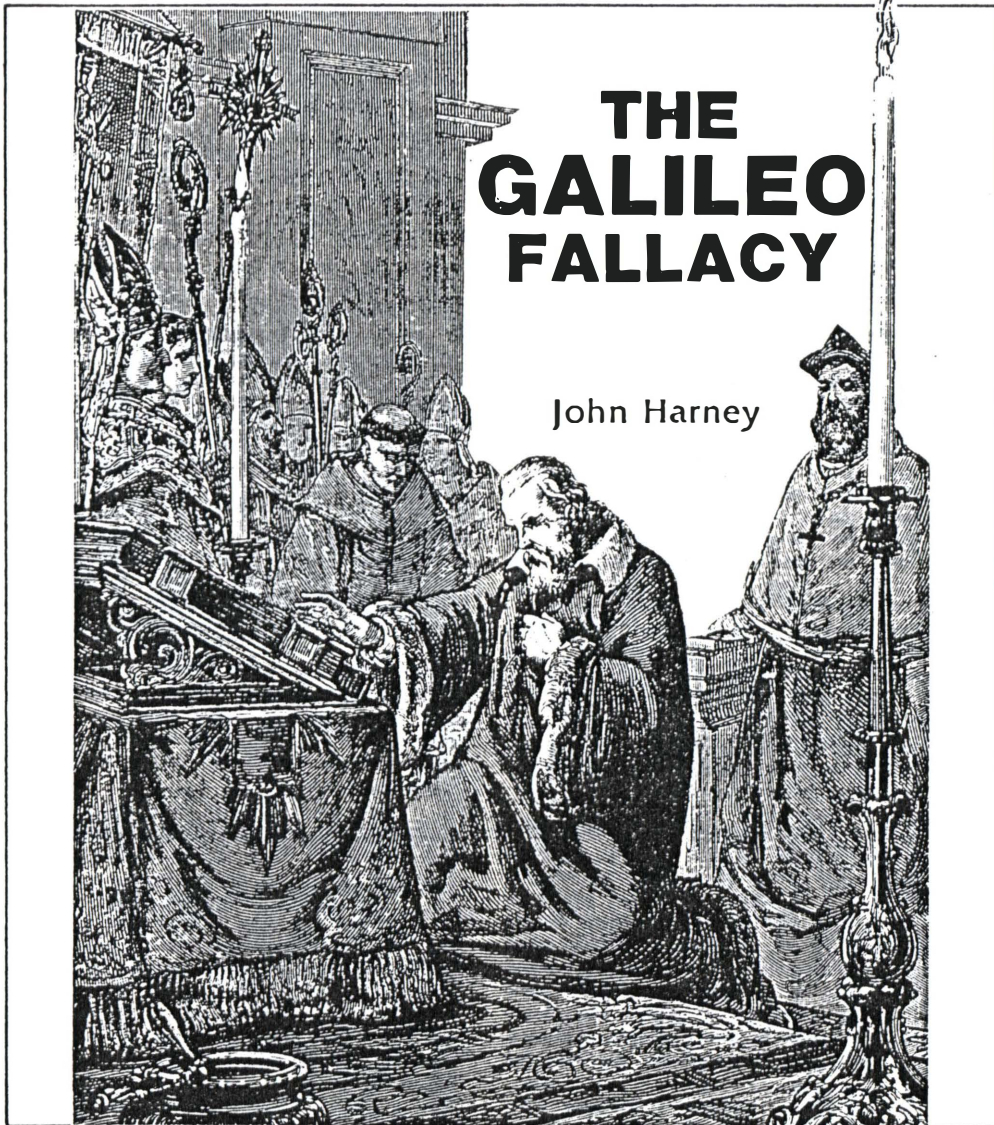
But even without that title, the text contained a sophisticated philological multi-pun that must have given its inventor more than one chuckle of satisfaction.

The palaeontologically-aware naturalist of Gray, we are told, lost no time in identifying the unwholesome-looking, newly-expired corpse as that of *Pterodactylus anas*. Every specific name attached to an animal - here 'anas' - has a meaning which can be translated from the original Greek or Latin. This meaning can be descriptive, or may commemorate the name of a place or person, perhaps the animal's discoverer. *Pterodactylus anas* is not one of the species listed in Henry Govier Seeley's authoritative *Dragons of the Air* (1901) which concentrates on the more important specimens found during the previous century; nor could the Natural History Museum locate it as a superceded term. Yet 'anas' must have some meaning.

Indeed it has, though when we take down any comprehensive Latin dictionary the results don't seem to promising. 'Anas' simply stands for 'duck' - the bird not the verb; on the face of things a description presumably based on the size of the ptero-

THE GALILEO FALLACY

John Harney



We all agree, don't we, that Christians in general, and Catholics in particular, ought to cringe at the name of Galileo, because of the way he was treated by the Church. Galileo, as we all know, was persecuted by the Church, and attempts were made to suppress his theories and discoveries because of the stupidity, ignorance and general fat-headedness of the Pope and his henchmen.

This is more or less the generally accepted view, but is it true? Actually, it is a view which conveniently ignores the facts of the case. Galileo's troubles with the Church were largely self inflicted, as I shall attempt to show, beginning with the background to the case.

The development of Christian thought was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, to the extent that the Church Fathers had adapted their interpretation of the Bible to fit in with the Aristotelian world picture. The basic principle of this picture was that the Earth was stationary at the centre

of the universe and that the Sun, Moon and planets revolved around it with uniform, circular motions. Surrounding them was the sphere holding the fixed stars which had a daily rotation and which bounded the universe. This, together with other notions concerning the nature of the universe, became inextricably entwined with Christian thought to the extent that it came to be generally believed that they were confirmed by Scripture, if properly interpreted. In 1546 the Council of Trent decreed that the general consensus of the Church Fathers should not be deviated from when interpreting Scripture.

Although astronomy was profoundly influenced by the Aristotelian world picture, the astronomers did not feel that they were entirely bound by it. Theirs was a practical art which had as its main purpose the prediction of astronomical events for astrological use, for adjusting calendars, and for navigation. The observed motions of the planets did not fit in with the accepted cosmological model and the astronomers had various mathematical devices by which they manipulated the conventional model in ways which made their calculations less cumbersome. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was an astronomer who was not content with mere mathematical devices, and he devised a Sun-centred system which he believed to be a true picture of the universe. He attempted to forestall criticism by pointing out that he had restored the principle of uniform, circular motion and by arguing that the stars were so far away the Earth was practically at the centre of the universe anyway.

Although Copernicus published his theory in 1543 it did not lead to any serious conflict with the Church until Galileo began to make a name for himself.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was a mathematician who supported the Copernican theory. He too wanted a theory which gave a true picture of the universe and he believed that he had found this in the theory devised by Copernicus. Not content with convincing himself he was determined to publicise and defend his theory until it became generally accepted and he expressed his arguments in a forceful manner.

He first became widely known as the result of publishing a book called *The Starry Messenger* in 1610. In this he argued against the Aristotelian system and in favour of Copernicus, and supported his arguments with accounts of his observations with the recently invented telescope. He described the Moon's craters and mountains and thus disposed of the classical idea that all the heavenly bodies had perfectly smooth surfaces.

He also presented other material which discredited the Aristotelian system. However, and this is an important point, he did not prove the correctness of the Copernican theory. Tycho Brahe's alternative hypothesis was available, and according to this the Earth was at the centre of the universe with the Moon revolving around it, and further out the Sun also revolving around the Earth, with Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn revolving around the Sun. Galileo never got around to refuting this theory; he simply did not accept it, although it was not logically inconsistent with his observations. Now if Galileo could not disprove an alternative hypothesis it thus followed that he could not prove the Copernican theory or even demonstrate that it was the most plausible model of the universe of those that had been devised up to that time. Another important point about the theory which was not emphasised by Galileo was that it could not be squared with accurate observations of planetary motions without introducing a complicated system of epicycles. He does not seem to have considered Kepler's simplifying assumption that the planetary orbits were elliptical.

Galileo never got round to refuting Brahe's theory—he simply did not accept it.

because he was, like Copernicus, strongly attached to the principle of uniform circular motion.

Galileo was first in trouble with the university professors who were naturally appalled at the prospect that the Aristotelian cosmology they were teaching might be dismissed as nonsense and rapidly replaced by a radically different model of the universe, which would make them look rather foolish. Those of them that claimed that his observations were illusory did have a point though. Galileo's telescopes were very crude compared to modern instruments and it is hard to believe, for instance, that an uneducated eye would clearly see the phases of Venus through them. The observers would have to know what they were looking for to make any sense of the tiny blurred images presented to their gaze. Even with a modern small telescope it is difficult to see Venus clearly, because of the dazzling brightness of the planet.

However, when Galileo visited Rome in 1611 he had a very friendly reception from Pope Paul V. The Jesuits favoured intellectual pursuits and their authority

on astronomy, Father Clavius, had informed Cardinal Bellarmine, head of the Roman College, that he could confirm that Galileo's telescopic observations were genuine.

At this point we may ask if Galileo could have avoided his eventual conviction of heresy and his humiliating recantation. Almost certainly he could have. There is no reason why he should have become involved in any serious quarrel with the Church had he been more circumspect and had he only realised that he was unwittingly forcing the Church authorities into a position where they would have to take decisive action on the matter. Certainly, Galileo had enemies, but this is the lot of all persons who become well-known. He also had many influential friends in the Church; after all, he was a Catholic and as much a member of the Church as any other. Also an increasing number of natural philosophers in the Church were gradually coming to realise that Aristotelian cosmology was becoming untenable.

As for Galileo's enemies, there is evidence that they were not taken very seriously by the Church. Lodovico delle Colombe organised opposition to Galileo, and one of his methods was to try to persuade priests to preach sermons against Copernicanism. (Colombe's supporters were known as the 'pigeon league' because Colombe is the Italian word for dove.) Colombe's men influenced the Dominican Father Caccini, who preached a sermon in somewhat immoderate terms, against Galileo, Copernicanism and mathematicians in general, accusing them of being enemies of Christianity. The important point about this incident is that Caccini's outburst was firmly disowned by the Church. The Master-General of the Dominican Order wrote to Galileo to apologise for it. The opposition of the 'pigeon league' and its clerical supporters was not to be taken too seriously; we must look elsewhere for the real causes of Galileo's tribulations.

The real causes, I suggest were Galileo's own argumentative character, the relative weakness of the arguments with which he attempted to bolster the Copernican theory and, above all, his forceful expressed views on the correct interpretation of Scripture with respect to scientific matters.

It is customary to look at the controversy from Galileo's point of view. However for the Church's point of view there were a number of practical considerations and these were clearly expressed in a letter which Cardinal Bellarmine wrote in reply to the Carmelite friar, Paolo Foscarini, who had sent him a copy of his book which asserted that the Copernican system was literally true. Bellarmine pointed out that

acceptance of the idea of a sun-centred universe as being literally true would not only irritate the theologians and scholastic philosophers, but would injure the faith of many by making the Bible appear to be false, bearing in mind the interpretation of the Bible agreed by the Church Fathers and endorsed by the Council of Trent. He agreed that the Scriptures would need to be reinterpreted if the truth of the Copernican system could be demonstrated, but pointed out that such proof had not yet been forthcoming.

Galileo, apparently insensitive to such considerations, went to Rome in 1615 and debated his cause so energetically that Pope Paul V felt the need to request an official statement on the matter from the Congregation of the Index. Not surprisingly their judgement confirmed the established teachings of the Church. Galileo tried again in 1624, hoping that the election the previous year of Maffeo Barberini as Pope Urban VIII might have made the climate more favourable to his views, as Barberini was an admirer of Galileo's work. However, he found that the new Pope upheld the



VRBANVS VIII
nus Florentin' creat'
Sedit an 20. mens. ii.
Iulij an 1623. Vac.
Maphæus Barberi:
die 6. Augusti an 1623
thes 22. Obijt die 29
Sed. dies 58.

Pope Urban VIII

- an admirer of Galileo's work

same attitude and Galileo was again told that he was quite free to discuss his ideas, provided he made it quite clear that they were mere hypothesis, and did not purport to give a true picture of the universe.

Again, he failed to take the advice, and finally went too far, so far as the Pope and his advisers were concerned, in his book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Principle Systems of the World*. In this, by the use of irony, he insinuated that the Church's attitude was based on foolishness and ignorance. It was typical of him that he obeyed the summons to Rome to be tried by the Inquisition, instead of taking up an offer of asylum in Venice, presumably still determined to convert the Church to his way of thinking.

Perhaps his greatest error was to see that one of his major arguments worked both ways. He argued that the authors of the Bible accommodated their writings to everyday speech and common beliefs

PTERODACTYL - from page 7

dactyl, as there's little to choose between a duck-sized bird and the ILN's assertion that the specimen was the size of a large goose.

But there is more to it than that. Besides being Latin for duck, 'anas' was the root for several other words for that bird in European languages, notably French - le canard. Here is where the punster comes into his own, for in English popular speech, 'canard' has a highly amusing meaning: it means 'false news' or 'hoax'.

The French have been talking about "halfselling a goose" - a venture so self-evidently impossible as to stand for fooling somebody - since the early seventeenth century. The derived use of the more compact 'canard' had certainly crossed the Channel to Britain before 1850. At the time of the ILN story it was becoming an increasingly common expression in print. The ILN's 'whale' of a tale could just as easily have been called a duck of a yarn or an exercise in old-fashioned duck salesmanship, French-style.

Quite conceivably the punster whose choice of 'species-name' was a direct comment on the bogus quality of their own story never expected the thing to achieve very much. It might indeed delude a few gullible ones and perhaps generate enough curiosity for those stuffy, patronising experts to find themselves on the end of many time-wasting questions about living pterodactyls. The modestly-cultivated reader with his classical

in order to put their religious message in a manner understandable to all, yet he failed to realise that the Church had to do the same to express its teachings in terms that could be understood by ordinary people, and not just by philosophers and intellectuals. The Popes and others in the Church who bore heavy responsibilities for the spiritual welfare of millions were obviously aware of this. They realised that any sudden change in the Church's teaching would cause great harm by throwing the faithful into confusion. They were also no doubt aware that it would be very rash to make such drastic changes to accommodate a scientific theory which might yet be shown to be false and be superseded by yet another theory.

Had Galileo realised this, and taken the Church's advice, then perhaps the new astronomy could have gradually and painlessly taken hold of popular awareness and the cosmology of Aristotle would have died a natural death. \$\$\$

education would hover for a few minutes, but soon would be wearing a broad grin as he saw the pterodactyl for the 'canard' it really was. The inventor wouldn't have dared imagine this little fabrication would last for over a century and continue to retain a place in the *Amazing Mysteries* literature of the 1980's. For if the joke is on anyone, it has to be on us. What the Victorians were offered as a jest, we have taken as solid, mirth-free fact. We have swallowed the whale, and half-bought the duck...

One reason for this state of affairs is that we don't share our so-literate-forefathers' love of puns. Nor is Latin seen any longer as an inevitable acquisition of schooldays, which makes us even less likely to see the point when a writer tells us in one breath that a living pterodactyl is on offer, and in the next that it belongs to a certain species named the Pterodactyl Hoax! We are locked still more firmly to straightforward assessments - a thing being either Fact or Fiction - by reading the account in Fortean or Ripleyesque books which encourage us to believe it's Unbelievable but True.

Having considered all that, there is something endearing about the French Pterodactyl that makes us want to believe in it. The most incredible aspect of the story is that it not only survives but shows no sign of vanishing into dinosauric extinction.



MAURIZIO VERGA

In the first part of this article I discussed ufologists and other anomaly researchers in general, discussing their behaviour and the material limits to their activities. In this second part I will look more closely at the figure of the individual researcher and, marginally, at the 'classic' UFO group.

The Private Researchers:

The figure of the so-called ufologist is fairly complex and controversial. In some ways the term 'ufologist' is a rather flattering misnomer, suggesting as it does a member of the scientific community, comparable to a 'chemist' or 'physicist'. It would be more accurate to speak perhaps of the UFO or anomaly 'student'. This student is a person particularly attracted by mystery, who has decided to deal with the UFO question, perhaps coming from previous approaches to other unusual themes. An enquiry carried out by the French magazine *Lumieres de la Nuit* reveals that not less than 81% of respondents were attracted by mysterious topics in general, whilst only 57% reported an interest in science fiction. This datum could be explained by ufologists' fear of seeing UFOs wrongly associated with science fiction.

The first stage of interest in the topic is as a hobby, such as philately. Some however develop their interest further, from a variety of motives. One of these is certainly narcissism; ambition linked to the wish to rise above others in a field easily accessible to such an aim. It is at this stage that the study ceases to be a simple hobby, often being developed to the prejudice of other activities, through considerable economic and psychological commitment. In general those who deal with the subject proceed along a fairly defined path, that includes

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all the various possible stages of development of the student's ideology and interest. Hendry [1] proposes a six-stage sequence. Only a few individuals succeed in reaching the top of this 'evolution'.

Some researchers, during their development have come to a sceptical, or at least critical, position. In the past these (few) 'ex-ufologists' have left their field of interest owing to mistrust produced by loss of belief. More recently however, these new 'sceptics' have not left the field of anomaly research, as noticed by Greenfield [2], but go on dealing with the question, if from a new viewpoint. These people have tended not to unite in distinct factions opposing the 'UFO believers', to try to persuade their former colleagues to change their minds. I think there are two reasons for this:

A. Their belief was very deep rooted, and the conversion to scepticism may have brought about a crisis of values. They may feel reluctant to inflict this on others.

B. They fear a negative, even hostile, response from their previous friends, particularly felt if they have been deeply involved in UFO and anomaly research over a long period, developing a large number of social ties.

But these 'moderate sceptics' are only a part of the restricted group of critical students. Others are more prepared to try to spread their own sceptical theses. Such 'radicals' show themselves as the advocates of a rational truth, obscured by the fideistic or anti-scientific beliefs of those they dismiss as 'eager believers'.

All these 'researchers' are directly or indirectly responsible for all that happens within the ambit of their subject. By their own actions and characteristics they themselves represent a research topic worthy of the highest interest. One comes to the contradictory situation where where, as Caudron [3] says, ufologists behave like objects, not subjects, giving rise to a new, and no less mysterious study, 'ufologistology'!

The figure of the amateur researcher, unprepared and disposed to emotional behaviour and ideology has dominated (indeed, been the predominant feature of) that abstract doctrine known as ufology. These attitudes have helped to make the ufologist (and indeed the researcher in many others fields) a generally negative factor in developing a scientific research programme attached to any of these topics.

This is the present situation, but what of the future? What will be the ufologist's function in any desirable research developments? To answer this it is necessary to presume that there is indeed any real research

possible - this in itself leaves a lot of doubt and perplexity. I would suggest that the attitudes of students has not developed greatly during the last 40 years, and will not change greatly in the future. Indeed, the response to the LDLN poll, which shows that 72% of respondents think there have been positive developments in that period suggests that researchers do not feel excessively spurred on to change their course.

However recent trends do suggest that there will be more and more people arriving a sceptical or highly critical positions, who will help to reshuffle as much as they can of all the assorted rumours, myths, stereotypes, illusions and assumptions that surround the field. So it is possible that there will be some revision of the whole question, which may lead to a strictly rationalist approach, and the demolition of much of the 'mystery' of the subject.

It is the attraction of the 'mystery' that has produced most interest in the subjects. The most immediate consequence of any 'demystification' will be a massive desertion from the field.

The 'eager believers', 'ufomaniacs' or whatever will exist in a sort of ghetto, where revolutionary novelties disturbing the traditional order are not accepted. One of the reasons for this is the wish to remain in touch with a particular ambience, a feeling of fraternisation and community, apart (and an object or derision, or at least of incomprehension) from 'ordinary people'. This produces a strong social link between the members of this community. This is characterised by the organisation of meetings and conferences, and the development of a wide range of social contacts.

The Groups:

At a certain point in the evolution of their interest many amateurs join a group. Some feel that being a member of a 'centre' or 'society' raises their own image considerably. Apart from the inevitable internal publication, most members receive, as benefit for their payment, an automatic acknowledgement in the ufological or paranormal ambit. Unfortunately most of these members make no effective contribution to investigation, forming the background against which the few people who really work, operate. In fact this is not necessarily a bad thing - the majority of passive members should be able to provide the resources, largely financial, for the minority of active researchers. Unfortunately this does not happen, as the more usual practise is for this passive membership also to use up most of the group's resources with projects that provide only surface benefits: the provision of a journal of the highest possible press-quality, perhaps not justified

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by the contents thereof, and intense popularisation work amongst the general public.

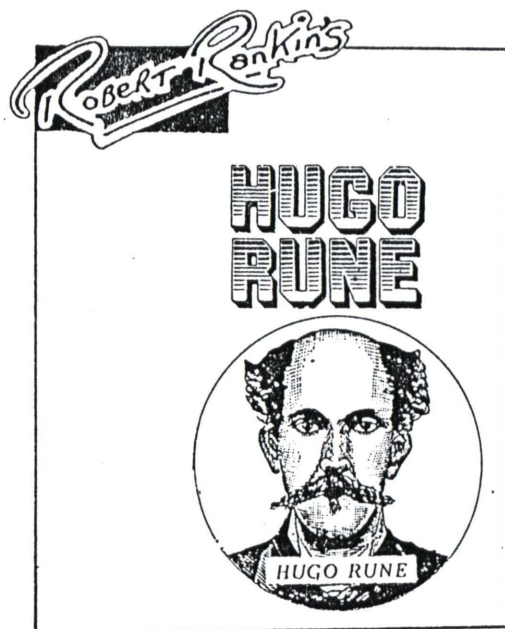
The less glamorous aspects of group work - planning of investigations and organisation of research have always been neglected. Additionally, too much effort is wasted in the provision of bureaucratic structures more suited to international firms than small voluntary groups. This manifests itself in the production of an enormous quantity of trivial items - headed paper, superb monograms, stickers, posters, membership cards - produced by groups both to spread their image, and above all exalt it.

Alternatively local groups may be dominated by one individual, brought to life by one, usually rather charismatic, figure. This type of group is accurately and ironically illustrated by the late lamented Leuba [1]. On the Italian scene UFO 'research groups' developed in a macroscopic way (more than 500 small associations!) in the mid-seventies, largely with the support of a commercial magazine, *Il Giornale dei Misteri* (Journal of Mysteries). It put a considerable proportion of its pages at the disposal of these groups. The spur of seeing ones own name and writing in a professionally produced magazine gave good results. In the course of a very few years, with little activity and with negligible results, nearly all these groups disappeared from circulation. Very few survived, in even a nominal form, and now all have vanished.

Conclusions:

This short consideration of some aspects of the figure of the ufologist has demonstrated enough characteristics to allow us to form an image, albeit fragmentary, of the people concerned. He may be seen as the creation, perhaps the victim, of the UFO myth, which often entirely dominates his life. He has considerable limits - his involvement in the subject is essentially 'play', a pastime to contrast with an essentially humdrum everyday life. After all, ufology as carried out for the past 40 years represents nothing but a new kind of escape from reality, even if sometimes led by special motivations. It is an innocuous process, essential to the participant. Those who wish to remain at the limits of 'escape' are free to do so. Others, who are not so satisfied with this attitude, must try to develop a much more serious approach. Maybe even so this work will prove to be ultimately futile, and they will be frustrated at having to spend so much time and money on it, but at least they too will have satisfied their own personal ambitions, even if negatively.

REFERENCE: *. S. Leuba (1981) 'Splendeurs et miseres d'A.R.E.U.' *OVNI Presence*, 6; 18; pp.6-7



The annals of occult history bulge mightily with tales of many a colourful character, but the enigmatic figure of Hugo Rune stands head and shoulders above the rest.

For if not the most greatly revered and widely chronicled, Rune was certainly the tallest, standing nearly six foot seven in his 'cosmic cottons'.

OF HIS remarkable powers, much has been written, and of his abandoned womanising, countless legal battles and love of 'dining out', a great deal more.

Rune was the exaggerated shadow cast in the fashionable places of his day.

Certainly the charges of living off immoral earnings and gross physical brutality (what he called the 'cruel to be kind' approach) are not wholly without foundation, but of his extraordinary control over his own body (he could give himself an all-over suntan through will-power alone and once grew a pair of sideburns overnight to win a bet with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) there remains little doubt.

He had met and talked with the Secret Chiefs, he claimed, and his skills as a mathematician are as yet unparalleled. Scientists are only now coming to realise that Rune's theory of relativity puts that of Einstein (whom Rune referred to as "that unprincipled scoundrel") in total eclipse.

But it is for the claim that he could make himself invisible, and the remarkable

controversy which surrounds the public demonstration of this, that he is best remembered. In his book *The Remarkable Mr Rune* (now sadly out of print) H. G. Wells (a lifelong friend of Rune) gives his account of the affair, which he openly admits gave him the idea for his novel *The Invisible Man*. Wells witnessed the demonstration, and also the notorious 'leg-biting incident' which scandalised Europe.

"We were assembled" writes Wells, "this particular morning in the Cafe Royal [Paris, France]. There was H. [possibly Rudolf Hess], several of the surrealist poets, a gentleman named Crowley who claimed to be one of Rune's disciples, and the blaggard Koeslar.

"Koeslar was as usual remonstrating with Rune. It was scientifically impossible, he claimed, for a man to become invisible. Rune had a faraway look in his eyes at the time (he later informed me he was testing his x-ray vision) but at length drew himself up to his full and awesome height, gazed down on Koeslar and declared: 'Invisibility is a piece of gateau, if you have the know of it'.

"Koeslar demanded to know how it could be achieved, but Rune declared that should such a secret fall into the wrong hands (namely those of Koeslar) the outcome would be disastrous. Koeslar threw another glass of absinth down his throat [Wells claims that Koeslar was an 'immoderate drinker', Rune however refers to him as 'that drunken maggot'. Ed.], and shouted 'Go on then, show us'.

"Rune sighed, put his hands to his temples and began to rock to and fro on his heels. As we watched expectantly a perceptible chill ran through the air and I noticed that the smoke from Rune's Sobrannie cigarette was held motionless in the air. To our utter amazement the mystic began to grow fuzzy about the extremities and within a few short seconds had vanished completely. Koeslar had fainted dead away, and was revived only when the contents of a nearby spittoon were emptied over him."

So ends Wells' account of the matter. Koeslar's version, however, differs quite dramatically from that of Wells. In his book *Hugo Rune; Wifebeater and Fraud* (now happily out of print) he tells it his way.

"Rune, as ever clinging to the shirt-tails of his betters, had insinuated himself into our company. Being drunk, he began to belabour our senses with more of his fantastic claims. 'Make yourself invisible, Rune' I quipped, meaning for him to depart us with haste.

"I shall", he drawled. 'I shall do it here and now'. Realising that he meant to perform one of his excruciating parlor tricks and knowing full well his skills as a ventriloquist, I had a pretty good idea of what to expect and so watched his every move with great care. Thus, when he suddenly cried out 'Isn't that Oscar Wilde?' and pointed madly towards the door, I alone saw him duck beneath the table.

"At last I had the God-given opportunity to publically unmask the scoundrel, and so took it. Stepping swiftly about the table and calling the others to observe me, I levelled my foot at the cowering con-man. To his great shame and discredit, Hugo Rune sank his teeth into my ankle."

The two accounts of this incident are at such variance that the reader might feel some degree of doubt as to what actually happened that fateful day. Happily a copy of the transcript from the resultant trial still exists, and Rune's own evidence, given in his defence under oath, remains.

"It was the first time I had made myself totally invisible and had not fully anticipated that whilst in a state of non-matter that I should no longer be subject to the forces of gravity, etc. I thus remained perfectly still in time and space whilst the Earth continued to roll on without me. Almost at once I became aware that I was sinking into the floor of the restaurant and had I not hastily materialised I should no doubt have been lost to the world. It was upon the moment of my rematerialisation that I found myself being violently kicked, I merely did what I could to defend myself. I am innocent of all the charges, your honour."

The verdict upon this occasion went against Rune, and he was led away to the cells.

Had that been the end of the matter then the reader's verdict might well, as that of the court, go against Rune. But there is an extraordinary tailpiece to the incident. When, less than an hour later, the jailer opened Rune's cell it was discovered to be empty. Within minutes of this being made public a telecommunication was received from Rio de Janerio.

It came from Hugo Rune! The message was a simple rhyme, which went as follows:

*They seek him here, they seek him there,
Those Frenchys seek him everywhere.
Is he in Heaven, or on the Moon,
That discopunting Hugo Rune?*

Throwing light on Rendlesham



Steuart Campbell

Now that Colonel Halt's tape recording of his nocturnal expedition has been released it is possible to make sense of what happened at Rendlesham just after Christmas 1980.

THE Halt memorandum claimed that, after seeing lights about 0300 UT on 27 December 1980 (lights which led them to believe that an aircraft had crashed), security patrolmen entered the forest outside the Woodbridge air base. There they saw a light which they considered to be a hovering craft. The next day (27 or 28 Dec.?) some ground markings were noticed and measured. The next night (29 Dec., *sic*) Halt and others, while measuring radioactivity in the area, saw a 'red sun-like light' through the trees. It appeared to 'throw off' glowing particles and break up into five separate white objects. Later three 'star-like' objects were noticed in the sky at an altitude (elevation) of about 10°. Two objects were to the north and one was to the south. They all moved rapidly in sharp angular motions and displayed red, green and blue lights. All these objects remained in the sky for several hours.

Investigation has already indicated that Halt was in error about the date of the first sighting and subsequent daylight inspection. Police records show that the lights were reported at 0411 on 26 December, and that they were notified of the ground disturbance at 1030 that day. Then it was discovered that a brilliant fireball (meteor) was seen over much of southern England at 0250 UT that day (as recorded in the BAA [Meteor Section] Newsletter No. 4, Feb 1981). Evidently the light the patrolmen saw was the fireball.

It is well known that those who do not know the true nature of such fireballs assume them to be a smaller object falling in flames a short distance away. It must be evident that only the belief that an aircraft had crashed in the woods could have motivated the guards to seek permission to investigate. Once among the trees, where various navigation beacons can be seen, the patrolmen could, as Ridpath suggests, have mistaken one or more of these beacons for the object they sought (although it seems unlikely that they could have been fooled by the Orford Ness lighthouse, which was only 8.6 km. away, and 28m. above sea-level).

The tape recording is a record of the taking of radiation readings and the sighting of various unidentified lights in the forest. It exhibits features which show it to be contemporaneous with the events described by Halt in him memorandum. From the times (all past midnight) it appears that the night in question was that of 28-29 December, although in view of Halt's error in regard to the date of the first sighting little confidence can be placed in this dating. Of more importance is the fact that it gives more information on the lights observed, and especially on the direction of those lights. With Ian Ridpath's permission, I quote the relevant extracts from his transcript of the recording:

•Halt: 0148. We're hearing very strange sounds out of the farmer's barnyard animals. They're very, very active; making an awful lot of noise.

Voices: ...pigmentation.

Halt: You just saw a light [garbled]. Slow down. Where?

Voices: Right on this position. Here, straight ahead in between the trees - there it is again. Watch - straight ahead off my flashlight, sir. There it is.

Halt: I see it too. What it is?

Voices: We don't know sir.

Halt: It's a strange, small red light. Looks to be maybe a quarter to half mile [1 km], maybe further out. I'm gonna switch off. The light is gone now. It was approximately 120 degrees from our site. Is it back again?

Voices: Yes, sir.

Halt: Well douse flashlights then. Let's go back to the edge of the clearing so we can get a better look at it. See if you can get the Starscope on it. The light's still there and all the barnyard animals have gone quiet now. We're heading about 110, 120 degrees from the site out through the clearing now...

Voices: There we go. About approximately four foot [1.2m] off the ground, about 110 degrees.

Voices: Yes sir, now it's dying.

Halt: Now it's dying. I think it's something other than the ground. I think it's something that's... We're about 150 or 200 yards [160m.] from the site... There is no doubt about it - there's some type of flashing red light ahead.

Voices: Sir, it's yellow.

Halt: I saw a yellow tinge in it too. Weird. It appears to be maybe moving a little bit this way? It's brighter than it has been. It's coming this way. It is definitely coming this way! Pieces of it are shooting off. There is no doubt about it! This is wierd!

Voices: Two lights! One light to the right and one light to the left!

*It's coming this way.
It is definitely coming
this way. Pieces are
shooting off!
This is wierd!*

Halt: Keep your flashlights off. There's something very, very strange. Keep the headset on, see it is gets any... Pieces are falling off it again!

Voices: It just moved to the right.

Halt: Yeah.

Voices: Off to the right.

Halt: Strange: [? One again to the left?] Let's approach to the edge of the woods up there. You want to do without lights? Let's do it carefully, come on. OK, we're looking at the thing. We're probably about two to three hundred yards [230m] away. It looks like an eye winking at you. Still moving from side to side. And when you put the Starscope on it, it's like this thing has a hollow centre, a dark centre, like the pupil of an eye looking at you, winking. And it flashes so bright in the Starscope that it almost burns your eye... We've passed the farmer's house and across into the next field and now we have multiple sightings of up to five lights with a similar shape and all but they seem to be steady now rather than a pulsating or glow with a red flash. We've just crossed a creek and we're... seeing strange lights in the sky.

Halt: 2.44. We're at the far side of the second farmer's field, and made sighting again about 110 degrees. This looks like it's clear off to the coast. It's right on the horizon. Moves about a bit and flashes from time to time. Still steady or red in colour.

Halt: 3.05. We see strange strobe-like flashes to the, er... well, they're sporadic, but there's definitely some kind of phenomenon.

Halt: 3.05. At about 10 degree [altitude], horizon, directly

north, we've got two strange objects, er, half-moon shape, dancing about with coloured lights on 'em. That, er, guess to be about 5 to 10 miles [8-16 km.] out, maybe less. The half moons are now turning to full circles, as though there was an eclipse or something there, for a minute or two.

Halt: 3.15. Now we've got an object about 10 degrees [alt.] directly south, 10 degrees off the horizon. And the ones to the north are moving. One's moving away from us. Voices: It's moving out fast.

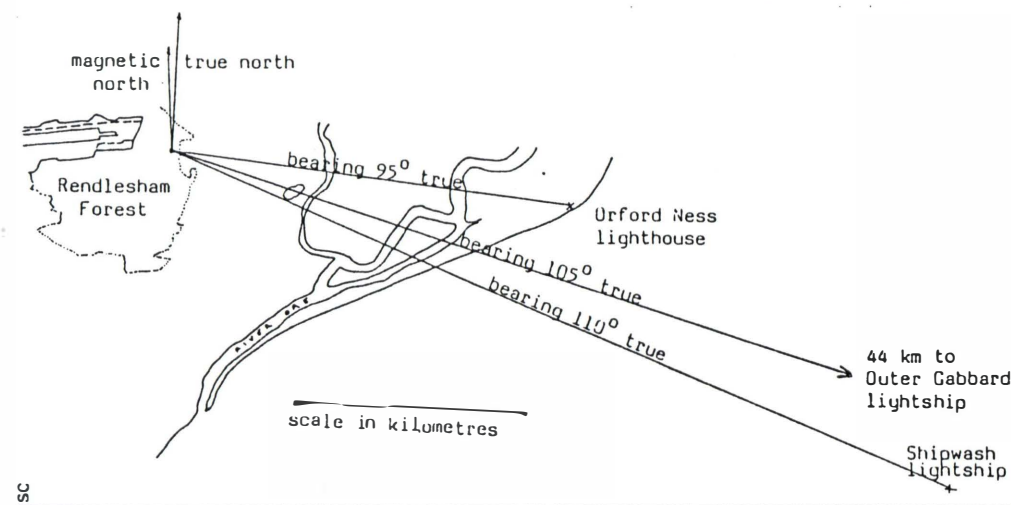
Voices: This one on the right's heading away too!

Halt: They're both heading north. OK, here he comes from the south, he's coming towards us now. Now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground. This is unreal!

Halt: 03.30, and the objects are still in the sky although the one to the south looks like it's losing a little bit of altitude. We're going around and heading back towards the base. The object to the south is still beaming down lights towards the ground.

Halt: 04.00 hrs. One object still hovering over Woodbridge base at about 5 to 10 degrees off the horizon. Still moving erratic, and similar lights and beaming down as earlier.

Ridpath has concluded that the first light described in the recording (as well as in the memorandum) was that from the Orford Ness lighthouse, which flashes once every five seconds. However, that light lies on a bearing of 100 degrees magnetic, whereas Halt reported his first light between 110 and 120 degrees (at the time the magnetic deviation for SE England was 5 degrees W). Now there is a light source lying on a bearing of 115 degrees magnetic (110 true); it is the Shipwash lightship 18.2km. away (see diagram). Shipwash's light, 12m. above the sea, gives three rapid pulses every 20 seconds. Apart from the colour (which was uncertain) all



other features of the light are consistent with it being the lightship; it was on the correct bearing, on the horizon, intermittent and pulsing in a strobe-like fashion.

Discounting Ridpath's claim that the light was the Orford Ness lighthouse, and noting that the lightship was also visible, Butler, Street and Randles (henceforth BSR) wondered why two UFOs had not been reported (Sky Crash, p.177). Now we see that at one point two lights were seen, but that does not mean that the second light was from Orford Ness. The recording indicates that the two lights were fairly close together and of similar intensity. Now it is just possible that this second light was from the Outer Gabbard lightship 44km away. It lies on a bearing of 105 degrees true, and has a light which pulses four times every twenty seconds. Invisible to the naked eye, it may have been visible with a telescope or binoculars (we do not know what optical aids were available to Halt that night). Thus there were two pulsating light sources lying within 5 degrees of each other in the direction in which Halt and his men were looking. No prominent astronomical objects lay near the horizon between azimuths 95-110 degrees at that time, although cloud permitting Jupiter and Saturn (in close conjunction) and the Moon were above the horizon in the SE. In fact the bright Moon would have made it difficult to see the planets.

We can identify the other lights seen by Halt as follows. The two 'strange' objects seen at 0305 UT directly north were probably the bright stars Deneb and Vega, both of which lay near the horizon to the NNE. The southern object appears to have been the star Sirius, although it was actually setting in the SW. Halt evidently did not refer to his compass for

these sightings. Bright stars seen near the horizon do appear to jump about (due to atmospheric turbulence) and they will display spectral colours (due to refraction). Since the northern stars were rising their shape could have appeared to change from an ellipse to a circle, and they would appear to recede as refraction declined. As it set, Sirius would begin to exhibit strange effects and appear to approach.

If, on the night of 28/29 December, Halt and his companions thought that there was something odd and mysterious about two lightships and three stars, then we may conclude that there was no more unusual explanation for the earlier report. Convinced that something had crashed into the forest, the patrolmen were prone to misinterpret conventional stimuli. Since they reported the object to have red and blue lights it seems likely that it was the star Spica, then low on the eastern horizon. Further reports can have been a result of one or both of the explanations! Considering that groups of servicemen were prowling around in the forest, it is not at all surprising that the nearby farm animals were disturbed. Furthermore, it seems likely that the lights which were seen in the forest were those used by Halt and his men. Lights reported above the forest can have been Jupiter and Saturn seen before the Moon rose. Ridpath has already shown that the radioactivity readings were normal, and a simple explanation is available for all the other circumstantial evidence collected by BSR. To those who are convinced that a spacecraft has landed innocent data becomes sinister evidence.

Since Halt could not identify the lights he and his men saw, and since he invested them with mysterious qualities, it was inevitable that rumours about the objects would begin to circulate on the Woodbridge base. Because everyone has heard about UFOs and knows the usual components of the myth, it was inevitable that some personnel would exaggerate the rumours until they became stories of an alien landing. Without a clear and authoritative explanation such rumours are difficult to stop, and it would have been especially difficult to prevent them reaching a local UFO buff.

This process seems to have been assisted by some personnel who deliberately leaked the rumours either as a joke or because they really believed them. Even Halt appears to have embroidered his account to Butler and Street. Furthermore, the rumours seem to have unbalanced at least one serviceman. If, as has been alleged, drug abuse is extensive amongst USAF personnel, it is not surprising that

they had difficulty in separating fact from fiction. Obsessive official secrecy (or lack of frankness) made matters worse; it appeared that the military had a lot to hide when all they had to hide was their own ignorance!

The 'investigation' by BSR has consisted of little more than the collection of rumours and reports from people who had some connection with the Woodbridge base or who lived in the area. It is clear that many of these reports have been supplied only because BSR demanded them! That Halt's own son considered inventing an account for profit suggests that others may have done so for excitement or to impress. Butler and Street repeatedly pestered people who denied seeing anything, and they seem to be unconscious of the extent to which they themselves can have generated many of the stories.

While Butler and Street were naive and inexperienced, BUFORA's Director of Investigations should have been able to reach the right conclusions. However, her subjective approach to UFO reports has led her astray. Even now she thinks that the Halt tape is faked, as if the USAF would deliberately exhibit the incompetence of its personnel! Her readiness to co-author a sensationalist book about the case brings her judgement into question.

The RAF commander at Bentwaters air base gave a good summary of the case. 'Two totally unscientific investigators' had blown up the affair out of all proportion and had caused him and the base no end of trouble. Colonel Halt had seen a few lights which had now been explained (as the light-house). One of the airmen involved, who had been 'blabbering away', had been sent home, since when he had been telling 'ridiculous stories' (Sky Crash, p 258).

BSR would have us believe that something like the story of the film *Close Encounters* came true in Rendlesham Forest. The truth is that, due to their ignorance of both natural and man-made phenomena, some USAF personnel started a rumour which BSR have, equally ignorantly, broadcast. It is a study in incompetence, and demonstrates the uselessness of credulous investigators.

[Editors postscript: Speaking at a BUFORA lecture on November 9th, Jenny Randles stated that she no longer considers the Rendlesham events to have any ufological or extra-terrestrial significance, but may be part of a military/security 'cover-up'. This opinion is shared by one of her co-authors, but not by the other, who still favours an extra-terrestrial explanation.]

The Men in Black, sinister anonymous characters who allegedly threaten and intimidate UFO witnesses, seem to have been around for as long as the UFO phenomenon itself - much to the chagrin of some researchers. Threats are sometimes delivered by telephone, often ordering the witness to keep quiet about their sighting - or else! No doubt some of these mystery callers are part of hoaxes by disturbed individuals. Nevertheless, some cases beg a different explanation, a more disturbing one.

The 'Men in Black' A New Case?

PETER HOUGH

Most of the incidents we hear about surface from the United States; however, I became embroiled in a case here in the North West of England. It began with the investigation of a spectacular UFO sighting in the Golbourne area of Lancashire (about halfway between Liverpool and Manchester). As an investigator for the Manchester UFO Research Organisation (MUFORA) I was asked to call on a Mrs Hollins, and heard the story she recounted.

On the night of August 31st, 1980, feeling unwell and not wishing to disturb her husband, she was sitting on the settee in the lounge of her bungalow. At about 2.00 a.m. she was awoken by a bright light shining through the curtains. Perturbed, she wondered if it was their car, parked across the road, which had caught fire. She crossed to the window and pulled the curtains apart.

She was amazed to see that the light was coming from an object low in the sky, hovering apparently over some distant trees. Intrigued, yet slightly afraid, she went out onto the front lawn for a better view.

The object she described as spherical, light grey in colour, with a black band around its circumference. Set in the grey area were three dark blue nodules in a triangular configuration. Issuing from one side were red flames and sparks. The sky behind the object was misty and glowed a pinkish-red colour.

As she watched spellbound, Mrs Hollins saw a structural device of some sort being lowered from the 'craft' into the trees below. After a short time the apparatus retracted. Suddenly, at a terrific speed, the object moved soundlessly in her direction, turned sharply north, then sped away in a southerly direction, to disappear from sight.

Fortunately, because of the events which followed, the sighting was further corroborated by two other female witnesses living about a mile away. They observed the object from 1.40 a.m. to approximately 2.05 a.m. - about the time Mrs Hollins was woken up. Although their descriptions differed in some respects, this could be accounted for by different angles of observation. Both accounts agree with the flames and sparks spluttering from the object, and the bizarre pink-red mist behind it.

The sighting appeared in a few short paragraph in a local newspaper - a story



EDITORIAL NOTES

LITTLE room this issue for Editorial Notes, but in view of the response to our last light-hearted Editorial, no great loss, some readers might think. Our jocular comments on the mysterious circles which have appeared in cornfields in the south of England alleging hoax have been hotly denied by Earth Mysteries supporters, who claimed them as both manifestations of Earth Energies, and as part of some E.M.-based cult activity. Very interesting, but we see no reason to revise our original estimate of the situation (to coin a phrase).

A welcome to the Magonia editorial team for Mike Goss, foafloist, mystery animal tracker and tireless writer on the strange and bizarre. He brings to the magazine expertise in subjects which will widen our scope yet further. We hope you have all read his Evidence for the Phantom Hitchhiker, best of the 'Evidence' series. J.R.

instigated by one of the other witnesses, and not Mrs Hollins.

When I called to interview her I found a lady of average intelligence struggling to come to terms with what she had seen. She welcomed my interest and provided tea and biscuits as we discussed the matter. Her husband was present in the room, although he played no part in the proceedings, having a somewhat disapproving attitude. Mrs Hollins's strong personality had obviously overriden any objections he might have had to my presence.

After more than an hour, during which I had cross-checked much of the detail of her story, I asked a question which is my standard procedure: "Mrs Hollins, has anyone other than the local paper contacted you?"

She replied that only the previous week she had received a telephone call from a man purporting to represent Jodrell Bank - the radio telescope installation south of Manchester, in rural Cheshire. Apparently he was very interested in her experience and wished to question her closely about the sighting. When she asked how he had obtained her telephone number he laughed, and replied: "Don't worry, it was from a very good source."

"Do you mean the newspaper?" she asked. He failed to answer, but added he would be in touch shortly to arrange an interview.

I returned a week later, on September 21st, with a UFO Sighting Report Form for her to read and sign. Apparently the man had phoned once more; this time he asked her if she would accompany several other people in the area who had witnessed strange phenomena, to visit Jodrell Bank, where they would be asked questions.

She said he seemed to have an American accent, and claimed to have been present when the then Senator Carter had witnessed a UFO in Georgia. The voice then warned her not to associate with "cranks", and stated, yet again, that he would contact her to fix up a time and date to be interviewed.

At this stage I was becoming a little concerned, especially as Mrs Hollins had made me so welcome in her home. I was given what she thought was the name of the caller. Although not wishing to alarm her, I warned the witness to treat any future calls with caution. To my knowledge the Jodrell Bank staff were not interested in investigating UFOs, and passed all such information they received on to MUFORA.

I contacted the installation anyway, and asked if they were involved in a pro-

gramme of UFO witness interviews. Their spokesman flatly denied any such involvement, and had no knowledge of the caller claiming to represent them. When I mentioned his alleged name, I sensed the bemusement at the other end of the line. The name Mrs Hollins had given me was none other than the name of the new director of Jodrell Bank!

Several days later I telephoned Mrs Hollins. She told me the caller had arranged to pick her up in a car on Wednesday, October 8th, to take her to the observatory. I strongly advised her not to go unless positive proof of identity was produced. Whoever he was, I warned her, all the indications were that he had nothing to do with Jodrell Bank. The voice was lying.

The arrangements were for 1.30 a.m. She thanked me for the information, but advised me she had no intention of going alone in any case. A neighbour, a former policewoman, had offered to accompany her. Also Mr Hollins had arranged to be home in order to verify the man's identity. I suggested I would contact her later on in the evening to discover what, if anything, had happened. Just before the conversation ended she thanked me for taking such an interest in her welfare.

That was the last time I was to have such an amicable conversation with Mrs Hollins. Perhaps I sensed something wrong when I put the phone down, because even though she appeared to have made sensible precautions, I was still worried about the whole affair.

Unbeknown to anyone, I arranged to be in the vicinity that day. At 1.20 p.m. I parked discreetly near the entrance to the cul-de-sac. The Hollins's bungalow is situated at the bottom of the short road, partially screened from the other houses by thick bushes. By 1.45 p.m. - fifteen minutes past the appointed time - no one had arrived, so I decided to call on the witness to discover if the arrangements had been cancelled.

My repeated knockings on the front door received no response. Everyone seemed to be out - no Mrs Hollins, no husband or friendly neighbour. Perplexed, and preparing to walk away I heard something. It sounded like voices, so I peeked through the large picture window into the lounge.

I was surprised to see, in view of the fact that everyone appeared to be out, that both bars of an electric fire were on, with a dog lying docilely before it. The voices persisted in the background, and I realised they were coming from either a radio or television set. Getting nowhere, I decided to leave.

During the following week or more I endeavoured to speak to Mrs Hollins, only to be given the run-around. When I telephoned Wednesday evening, upon recognising my voice, she pretended to be a relative, and claimed she could not speak to me because there was "a man in the house", and would I call back later? I did, several times, but there was no reply. The witness now sounded a very frightened lady. I decided to give the case a rest.

I was totally bemused by the about turn in attitude of the witness. Up to three days before the alleged appointment she had been as friendly as ever, and seemingly pleased when I had warned her of the caller's fake identity. What had occurred in the meantime to drastically change her attitude towards me?

The obvious solution was that Mr Hollins, fearing the whole affair was becoming out of hand, ordered his wife to have nothing more to do with it. But if this was so, why was it not explained to me, making it clear she wanted to drop the case? Why the charade? And why did she sound so tense and nervous on the telephone?

If the strange caller was a genuine example of the MIB at work, then it was probable that she had been put under some sort of pressure not to discuss her sighting any further with anyone. Remember, she had already been warned not to speak to 'cranks', and perhaps this net had been widened to me and MUFORA. Maybe she had been warned to keep quiet, yet was loathe to sever the connection entirely sensing she might need our help.

The other scenario is that the entire episode had been made up by the witness and was just pure fantasy. I would not rule this out entirely, but I would argue against it on a number of fronts.

For one thing, the sighting itself was no hoax as there were other independent witnesses. So why then would she manufacture the story of the phone calls? It would only make sense if the initial experience had also been a product of her imagination. At no time did she claim the calls were sinister, either; it was only the checking I did which seemed to throw a dark shadow across them.

The content of the calls did seem to follow some sort of pattern similar to others made to UFO witnesses. The voice claimed to be someone 'official', warned her not to speak to 'cranks', and tried to upgrade his status by an alleged association with Senator, soon to be President, Jimmy Carter. Of course an added bizarre touch was his name, which happened to be the same as the man who is now director of Jodrell Bank.

As previously stated, the case was rested. Almost two years later, in 1982, it came up for discussion between myself and Jenny Randles. She suggested that she should give the witness a phone-call in an effort to clear up some of the mystery. I readily agreed.

Jenny phoned and spoke to Mrs Hollins. She told her she was researching for a book, and had read of her UFO sighting sometime earlier: would she be willing to speak regarding the matter? Mrs Hollins agreed, and an appointment was arranged for the following Thursday. I was to accompany Jenny on her visit.

We arrived around 1.30 p.m., and I parked at the end of the close. As soon as Jenny knocked on the front door there was a commotion of banging from the rear of the bungalow. It sounded like someone having trouble slamming shut a door.

As we went down the side of the building we noticed a large shed. Peering through its single dusty window we noticed a dog lying there: the same docile animal I has spotted that day on the lounge carpet. We wondered if that had been the source of the noise, although it seemed calm enough now.

The curtains at the rear of the bungalow were closed. This seemed odd, as it was daylight, and not sunny. Jenny knocked on the kitchen door, but no-one answered. Then we noticed that the door was not closed properly. She pushed gently against it, and it swung open.

She looked at me and I shrugged. "Hello", Jenny called through the open doorway. "Are you there, Mrs Hollins? It's Jenny Randles, the lady who phoned... we only want to speak to you. At least come and give us an explanation..."

I nudged her, there was toast under the grill. It was still warm.

Jenny called out a number of times, but although she had made an appointment, and there seemed evidence someone was at home, we received no reply. After pulling the door closed, we left.

That evening Jenny phoned the witness. Mrs Hollins claimed that she had not been at home because unexpectedly she had had to accompany one of her sons to hospital. It was felt undesirable to pursue the matter. The mystery would remain.

The Men-in-Black, apparent callers who frighten and intimidate certain UFO witnesses. They take on various guises, often complicating a case, sometimes elevating a UFO sighting into something much more bizarre.

Why?

NORTHERN E.C.H.O.S

THE PETER ROGERSON COLUMN

This seems to be a time in which both anomalous phenomena themselves, and my own interest in them, seems to be moving away from the dominant UFO orientation of recent years, perhaps towards other, more traditional forms.

While UFO reports have dwindled away, there is a veritable wave of Virgin Mary apparitions and moving statues in the Irish Republic. It is interesting to speculate about the connections between this outbreak and some other concerns in that country, such as the challenges to clerical authority on matters such as divorce, abortion and contraception, the publicity surrounding the Kerry 'Baby Murder' case, and the examination of national identity arising from the situation in Northern Ireland.

Political and nationalist overtones are very prominent, too, in the current series of Virgin Mary visions in Yugoslavia.

THE article by Peter Hough in our previous issue shows the kind of anomalous experiences ordinary people have. The superimposition of the witness's mother's features on the stranger is reminiscent of the situation in which Morton Schatzman's 'Ruth' superimposed the features of her father on those of her husband. The obvious ethical questions are raised in this case: that some form of supportive counselling may be required. As it would involve the percipient discussing his relationship with his mother, the reasons for his marital breakdown, etc., some kind of formal training would be needed.

DRAMATIC 'bedroom invader' and 'Hag' experiences are by no means uncommon. During my recent trip to Manitoba I was told an interesting story. X, while in his late teens, c. 1968, was awoken by a terrible cold in his room. Thinking that the window was open he looked up to see a bald entity wearing a surgical style gown at the foot of his bed. The figure moved up and away. About a year later the percipient was again awoken by a similar cold. Looking up he saw the entity's face right next to his own. He screamed and lashed out, breaking his hand on the bedpost in the process!

THERE are a number of topics which are crying out for detailed analysis - the sociology and psychology of haunted houses; for example. Themes occurring in hauntings include:

1. The idea of reciprocal violation: the 'incomer' violates the 'history' of the house. Conversely the incomer's privacy is shattered by an intrusive 'history' which will not lie down. There are similarities with reactions to burglary.
2. The reversal of the sentimental stereotype of the home as 'habitat', a bastion of safety, in which the 'wilderness' of a hostile world can be shut out. The haunted home is disordered, whilst outside is the world of policemen and streetlights. The parallels with domestic violence are obvious.
3. The whole theme is of oppression and violation by a 'history' which will not stay buried in the past, but which 'walks' and prevents the living getting on with their lives. This is what William Golding called 'off-campus history' - the history of Northern Ireland is an excellent example.

ANOTHER topic which would pay great dividends is a study of comparisons between 'visions of the afterlife' and contemporary Utopian speculation: for example the role of education and the class system in the Victorian spiritualist Summerland, and the relative occurrences of urban (New Jerusalem) and pastoral imagery in near-death experiences. Some of the latter clearly echo nostalgic visions of an archetypal carefree childhood in a picture-book small town. How much do these relate to the childhood belief systems of the experient?

Correction: In my last column, for 'Pattard', read 'Paffard'.

JOURNAL REVIEWS



BUFORA Bulletin. No. 18, July 1985. Main feature is a review by editor John Barrett of BUFORA's 1984-84 lecture programme, which included an impressively wide range of speakers. More Randles/Ridpath/Rendlesham arguments, this time from the proponents side; plus case reports and Nigel Watson's pre-1947 UFO bulletin. No. 18, November 1985. Something of a London edition (quite a rarity nowadays!) with an article on Heathrow-bound IFOs, and an introduction to the strange story of the South Bank kite-flyer, from Albert Budden - a very bizarre tale of which I hope to hear more. John Barrett gives a cagey review of *Sky Crash*, plus all the usual features. BUFORA membership includes subscription to the Bulletin, from 30 Vermont Road, London SE19. Now that the Bulletin is Britain's major purely-UFO magazine, they should reconsider offering subs. separate from BUFORA membership.

Fate. The following articles will be of interest to Magonia readers. **June.** 'The Mad Gasser of Botetourt' by Michael T. Shoemaker; a very interesting study of a pre-Matton gas attack and critique of mass-hysteria explanations. **July.** 'Giant Squids on the Attack' by Michael Goss, Scott Rogo on the 'near-death' experiences of children. Plus dispute between Rogo and Lawson on the Birth Trauma Hypothesis, which serves to show the dangerous polarisation of views between BT and ET proponents. **August.** Part 2 of Goss on squids; 'Undead in Rhode Island' by 'Paul Eno' (rumoured to be an alias of Scott Rogo); 'House of Suicides' by Andrew Green - prime example of speculation based on improbable tales no-one has taken the trouble to check up on. **September.** 'Is This the Secret of Life' by Susan Blackmore - critical review of Rupert Sheldrake's

'formative causation', plus 'Killer Kangaroo' - 'Island of the Sorcerers' by James McClenon. **October.** Mary Rose Barrington presents 'A Slip in Time and Space', a very interesting case of 'enchantment' & metachoric experience **October/November.** 'Seeing the Lights' by Hilary Evans - popular version of his thesis first published in *Probe* a couple of years back.

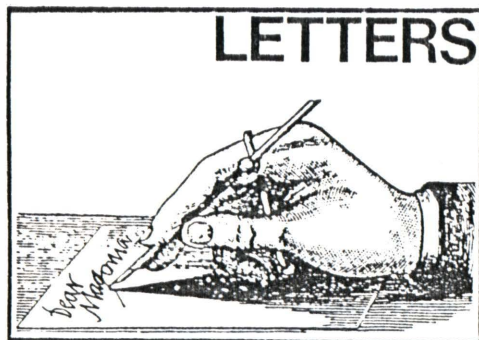
Lobster. Nos. 8, 9. There is important common ground between the worlds of conspiracy theory, ufology and paranormal research. *Lobster* (your guess is as good as mine) provides a sane overview of the often insane and murky world of the conspiracy-mongers, as well as keeping a wary eye on the very murky doings of some of the real conspirators. Recent issues include Magonia's Roger Sandell on 'Rightwing Conspiracy Theories'. Essential reading for anyone interested in the important government cover-ups. £3.50 for six issues from 17c Pearson Avenue, Hull, HU5 2SX.

Northern Earth Mysteries. No. 29, autumn 85. Now in A5 Magonia-like format, NEM covers a wide range of folk and EM related topics from the North of England. Paul Screeton gives a personal assessment of Dunkin Wedd, pioneer of leys-UFO links. £2.50 (four issues) from Philip Heslton, 170 Victoria Ave., Hull.

Northern UFO News. No. 115, Sep-Oct 1985. 'Species-field' is the in-word this issue as Jenny Randles ties her waggon to Rupert Sheldrake's causative formation star. The Peter Day UFO film is reconsidered, the latest proffered explanations seem as inconclusive as many previous ones - this far on will we ever be able to come to any rational conclusion? I doubt it. Do I detect an increase in the number of case reports in this issue - amid suggestions of a recent upturn in numbers of sightings. £5.50 (six issues) from NUFON, 8 Whitethroat Walk, Warrington, WA3 6PQ.

The Searcher. Malta's only paranormal publication; an eclectic mixture of phenomena and mysticism. Write to: S.R.I.P., PO Box 318, Valetta, Malta.

Sunday Times. October 6th, 1985. An excellent piece on the Virgin Mary apparitions at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia. Contains Fatima-style hidden prophecies, intra-Catholic sectarian disputes, visits to 'heaven, hell and purgatory', apparent resistance to pain during ecstasy, as well as inexplicable light phenomena apparently seen by reporter Gitta Sereny and crew, but no further details provided. It is interesting to note that one priest from Montreal has suggested an earth-lights explanation.



Dear Mr Rimmer,

I enjoy reading Magonia, and think it is well written and intelligent. However, I am moved to take issue with you on one matter, which pertains to the rather sharp and derisive criticism of recent issues of Flying Saucer Review, and its editor.

For thirty years FSR has been a very much respected journal in our field. It has never claimed to be the 'leading' UFO journal, neither has it resorted to attacking others. There may well be a change of editorial policy with a change of editor. But why is this so bad? The present editor is courageously expounding personal convictions about the possible origin of UFOs which may very likely have some foundation. His comments at the end of letters and articles merely reflect a different style of editorship. I do hope there is not a faint touch of envy?

What bothers me though, is that there is more than enough opposition from outside our subject without internal rivalries of such kind in print. Elsewhere in the current edition you exhort us to support small magazines and booklets, and think highly of the time, enthusiasm and expense spent on them. Do please do the same for the doyen of our subject.

With good wishes
Raymond E. Cox, Halesowen.

It is precisely because FSR has been a respected journal, as Mr Cox says "the doyen of our subject" for thirty years, that I, and a number of other ufologists, have been unable to remain silent whilst we have seen the Review turned into a platform for the espousal of extreme and unrepresentative opinions in the field of British ufology. This outspokenness is not a result of jealousy or 'internal rivalries', but, for my part at least, is an honest expression of dissent with an editorial policy which many of us believe is spreading a false and dangerous

impression of UFO research to many people with a sincere but marginal interest in the subject. Mr Cox is mistaken in saying that FSR has never resorted to attacking others - it has often, and with every justification attacked those who it has considered mistaken or mischievous - your Editor amongst others. This is quite proper, it is not 'opposition', it is the vital cut and thrust of dissent and debate.

Dear John Rimmer,

May I echo Manfred Cassirer's comments on Stuart Campbell's statements about objective evidence. The question is, I think, "how objective can you get?" I wonder if people like Stuart realize that their attitudes conflict with the whole judicial system of the Western world. Twelve good persons and true are presented with evidence and must draw certain conclusions from it, and experience shows that they are surprisingly correct.

If we had juries of twelve Stuart Campbell's presumably no-one would ever be convicted of anything - the evidence not being 'objective' enough. A gruesome prospect indeed!

Incidentally, Stuart would do well to remember that great 'scientific truths' are in reality no more than generally accepted opinions. I think it was Sir Karl Popper who said: "All scientific statements should be regarded as tentative."

Best wishes,
Roy Sanbach, Stockport.

Dear John Rimmer,

In support of his claim that (alleged) psychic phenomena leave physical traces Manfred Cassirer exhibits his own article "'Spirit Hands'; Fact or Fraud?" (J. Soc. for Psychical Res. 49 (777) 875-80). (I could not locate the other work referred to.) This article is a review of the many reports of the materialization of hands and arms at seances, and the investigation thereof. In respect of one report Manfred noted that "the trick - if trick there was - has never been exposed", and in another case he allowed the possibility of "a deliberate fraud by an investigator".

Despite these slight concessions to scepticism Manfred appears to have accepted that the reports were true, and if not he is now claiming that they were so. What credulity! The reports offer no evidence of adequate investigation and it is naive to quote the credulous conclusions of distinguished people as if their eminence made any difference.

As I understand it there is no modern evidence for materializations and the general conclusion is that they were a 19th century phenomenon (i.e. the reports were made because they were expected or desired and they are all of doubtful validity). By 'everyone' I meant every informed parapsychologist. For instance John Beloff accepts none of these historical reports as genuine and I doubt that the new professor of parapsychology at Edinburgh University will do so either.

Manfred's idea of Occam's Razor is incorrect. the 14th century surgeon used his razor to cut, not to shave! Consequently the philosophical Razor is used to cut out unnecessary hypotheses (such as the idea that the dead wish to shake hands with the living). After surgery one is left with the essential and simplest hypothesis - that 'materializations' are all trickery.

Yours sincerely,
Stuart Campbell, Edinburgh.

Dear Mr Rimmer

A number of the reviews of the small book *Skyways and Landmarks Revisited* (which I co-authored with Philip Heselton and Paul Baines) have disturbed me somewhat, for it seems that some people have misunderstood the purpose of the book. So, to set the record straight, I am sending this letter to all publications in associated fields, with a request for publication if you would.

I cannot speak for my colleagues, but my purpose in taking part in the project was not merely historical, and certainly it was not just to confirm a handful of alignments in Kent. Both these things are covered in the book, but they are to illustrate a basic fact: the re-emergence of leys and the subsequent Earth Mysteries movement were directly caused by communications from space people. As mentioned in the book, the evidence for this is in the fact that while some of Tony Wedd's points were some way off the beam, yet the system in Kent seems to be real. This seems to show that he had not simply found some leys and engineered them to fit his beliefs - the space people had indicated the lines and he simply made some mistakes regarding the points.

The 1954 'orthotonic' flap in France and the subsequent publication of *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery* and *Skyways and Landmarks* were in my opinion parts of a deliberate plan by benign extraterrestrials to educate us into knowledge of the Earth's energy system and its physical markers. (No subsequent flap proved orthotonic - seeming to show that this one had this particular purpose.) Yes, we have built

upon the knowledge, but it is little short of churlish to deny their part in the matter. The evidence in *Skyways and Landmarks Revisited* was published to re-state this case.

If anyone would be interested in reforming Tony Wedd's organisation, the STAR Fellowship, according to its original principles of welcoming extraterrestrial friends, I would be very pleased to hear from them, at the address below.

Yours Sincerely, Jimmy Goddard,
25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey.



— BOOKS WANTED —

Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain, Readers' Digest, 1973; Egyptian and Sudanese Folktales, Oxford University Press, 1978; Pioneers in Astronomy, Harrap, 1964. Please send offers for the above titles, in fine condition, to John Rimmer, 64 Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey.

PLEASE NOTE: the 'Books Wanted' column is open, free, to all Magonia subscribers, not just the Editor!

BRUNVAND, Jan Harold. The Choking Doberman, and other 'new' urban legends. Norton & Co., New York.

The most disarming thing about this wonderful book is that you will probably have heard most of these stories before, related in all candour as 'gospel' and, like myself, believed every word. The chicken bone stuck in the lady diner's throat that turns out to be rat: that happened in Ealing Broadway, I can point out where the Chinese restaurant used to be. And the tragically castrated child - now that really happened in Hounslow - or was it Isleworth? We don't get the spider's nest in the beehive hairdo, but these are 'new' urban legends. But what is 'new'? - many of these yarns have their genesis in music hall gags, which have later become 'true stories'; others show folklore motifs, which date back hundreds of years.

It seems that we are prepared to believe almost anything as long as it is told to us with enough sincerity (A. Collins, please note). After all, the convincing lie is always much more favourable to the unconvincing (or in most cases just plain dull) truth. And, of course, many of these people are Americans...



But why we do it and continue to re-do it, that is indeed the question...and all a matter of Foaf-lore. The Choking Doberman is a veritable pot-pourri of tall tales, and is definitely required reading - and definitely Christmas present material (can I keep this copy Mr Rimmer)[No. Ed.]. Buy yours now. But for pity's sake don't lend it to anyone, or you will inevitably find that it has been borrowed again by a friend of your friend's brother's wife's aunty, who herself had a very strange experience - although hers, of course, was definitely true. E.L.W.

RANDLES, Jenny. *Beyond Explanation: the paranormal experiences of famous people.* Robert Hale, 1985. £9.95

In her preface, Randles gives a plug for ASSAP, and one might hope for a reasonable

study of anomalous experiences, what actually is presented is a string of undocumented, scrappy anecdotes which read as though they were clipped from the pages of National Enquirer, Psychic News and the tabloid press, mixed with speculation which is unacceptable, not so much because it is pseudoscientific, (though it is), but because it is ill thought out and poorly expressed.

No doubt there are genuinely puzzling experiences amongst those recounted here, but they are difficult to separate from the after dinner stories, inventions of publicity agents sensation seeking journalists, and hack paper-back writers: a fact which Randles appears to appreciate by the last page.

She seriously weakens her case by seeking to subsume all kinds of coincidence, intuition, innate and aquired skill and rational inference to psi or poorly-understood 'species fields'. Her quoting of unsubstantiated rumours (i.e. the alleged 19th century Prime Minister who hanged himself in a house in Wales - which Prime Minister? - did Randles spend even ten minutes trying to check it out?)* There are exaggerated versions of genuine stories (the Pete B's highway ghost with the wrong legend and a completely false 'collision', for the real details see Owen's Science and the Spook, or Barden's Mysterious Worlds). She also shows credulous acceptance of nonsense such as the 'curse' of Tutankhamun's tomb (better be careful here, Randles warns us, one or two people who have dismissed it have paid for their comments with an early death), the non-existent Cheshire prophet Robert Nixon (invented as Hanoverian propaganda at the time of the '15), and Nostradamus. Far from making life easier for people who

Collins determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. Accordingly he, in the words of Robert Rankin - who is not one to disdain the use of artistic licence - "arrived hotfoot, with a ghetto-blasters, instamatic and the usual bevy of nubile lady acolytes".

He soon discovered that the Brentford area had longstanding associations with the heraldic beast. He also found a witness, Kevin Chippendale, who had apparently sighted the griffin quite independently before the publicity-stunt 'sightings' associated with the Watermans Arts Centre. Chippendale claimed that he had never heard of Robert Rankin.

Was Chippendale telling the truth? Was the whole affair rather more than a hoax? I've no idea. Why not read this good-humoured, profusely illustrated booklet and decide for yourself? J.H.

COLLINS, Andrew. *The Brentford Griffin; the truth behind the tales.* Earthquest Books (19 St David's Way, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8EX), 1985. £1.25

Were the stories about sightings of griffins over Brentford earlier this year (1985) just a publicity stunt devised by author Robert Rankin and his pals in aid of his hilarious Brentford novels and the Watermans Arts Centre, or was there something more mysterious going on? As soon as he learned of the griffin sightings on London Weekend Television's 'The Six O'Clock Show' on 15th March. Andrew



have had unusual experiences, this kind of 'Coronation Street star's psychic gerbil' type of production only increases scepticism. As a contribution to psychic research it is worthless; as a good read it is seriously marred by Randles' clumsy style, intrusive use of barbarous neologisms (which she seems so proud of as to take a page to list them) and confused speculation. The overall impression is of speed, carelessness, and 'thinking on the hoof'.

Randles is now collecting amazing pre-cognitions. I submit one of my own: it will take Randles some time to live down her speculation that the Loch Ness Monster is a nightmare in the 'life-field' or collective unconscious of the worlds fish[p.67]. P.R.

* Surprisingly few British Prime Ministers came to sticky ends. Robert Peel died as the result of falling off his horse; Spencer Percival was shot by a crazed Liverpoolian. None committed suicide. J.R.]

ALEXANDER, Marie. *Haunted Pubs in Britain and Ireland.* Sphere, 1984. £2.95.

Of little interest to the parapsychologist, compilations such as this give an insight into folk stereotypes. A small number of tales - the wicked suitor, the wronged servant, the lecherous monk, the highwayman, etc - attach themselves to many different pubs. The history is that of the chapbook and popular romance; and few if any tales would survive a rigorous search of parish registers or quarter-session records. Many are probably modern commercial inventions, though others probably date from an earlier period of oral storytelling, in which a local setting was provided for traditional legends. P.R.

LORIMER, David. *Survival? Body, mind and death in the light of psychic experience.* Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. £5.95.

In the first part of this book Lorimer surveys the various philosophical and theological attitudes to survival; in the second he examines the evidence for survival presented by the experiences of Swedenborg, apparitions, out-of-the body and near-death experiences, and alleged communications via mediums.

The reader who expects a detailed philosophical study or an objective survey of the evidence of psychic research concerning survival will be disappointed, for Lorimer writes as a 'true-believer' in the occult revelations of Rudolph Steiner. In the course of his review, much of modern science, philosophy and theology is brushed aside in favour of that gentleman's speculations about astral and etheric bodies, vibrations, etc.; couples with a gnostic vision of spirit trapped in a world of

matter. It is clear that Lorimer has grasped neither the extent of empirical evidence for psycho-physical unity, nor the cogency of theological and philosophical objections to a view of man which was developed by thinkers such as Plato, who elevated their own abstract reasoning above practical, material activities - which were the preserve of lesser beings such as women and slaves.

On the blurb we are informed that Lorimer 'suggests' death may be considered as a welcome release of consciousness from the space-time limitations of the physical body'. We are presented with a vision of the afterlife curiously reminiscent of 'The Waltons' or 'Little House on the Prairie' - a dangerously seductive opiate for the cannon fodder, whether suicide car-bomber, kamikazi pilot, or helpless victim of the big bomb. P.R.

REGIS, Edward, Jr. (Ed.) *Extraterrestrials: science and alien intelligence.* Cambridge University Press, 1985. £25.00

Some of the scientific and philosophical issues raised by the question of whether or not extraterrestrial intelligent life exists are discussed in this collection of papers, where the wide divergence of opinion shown demonstrates that it is very much an open question.

Ernst Mayr argues that as only one intelligent species developed on Earth after billions of years of evolution, the chances of intelligence developing elsewhere are close to zero. For this reason he believes that the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) programme is "a deplorable waste of the taxpayers' money". Although he is well aware of examples of convergent evolution, having established that "...eyes evolved independently not less than forty times in different groups of animals...", he rejects the argument that the same principle can be applied to the evolution of intelligence: as he also rejects the argument that the evolution of intelligence would necessarily lead to the establishment of a sophisticated technology.

David M. Raup also discusses convergent evolution, and argues that it does favour the development of intelligence. He also suggests that the fossil record indicates that life originated independently several times on Earth. He thus thinks that there is a good chance that ETI exists.

If ETI does exist, would alien science resemble ours, or would it be so different as to be incomprehensible to us? Nicholas Rescher thinks that the chances of an alien civilisation developing science in a manner resembling human science is extremely remote, but his arguments are somewhat abstruse and there is not enough space to discuss them here. His views are firmly opposed by Marvin Minsky

who discusses the constraints which nature imposes on all conceivable intelligent beings. He uses simple mathematical arguments to show that many problems have simple solutions and that although there may be other possible solutions, these are likely to be so complicated that they are not worth the effort of discovering and applying them.

If ETI does not exist, then there is no point in spending time and money trying to detect it. In the past few years some ingenious arguments have been developed in attempts to convince us of the non-existence of the extraterrestrials. Frank J. Tipler employs what has become one of the favorites - which may be called the 'von Neumann machine argument'. If the ETI's exist, then they should be here. They are not here, therefore they do not exist. An advanced civilization could build self-replicating machines, and it has been calculated that such machines could spread through the galaxy "in less than 300 million years".

Carl Sagan and William I. Newman oppose Tipler's argument by employing the *reductio ad absurdum* method: "...with any plausible initial mass for such a device, and with even one copy per reproductive event, the entire mass of the Galaxy would be converted into von Neumann machines within a few million years of their invention." Also: "These implacable replicators will not stop until the entire universe has been converted into about 10^{47} von Neumann machines, which then presumably cannibalise each other."

This is all good fun, but down-to-earth readers will want to see a more practical and constructive approach. This is provided by Jill Tarter, who considers that listening for artificial radio signals is the most promising method of trying to obtain evidence for ETI. She describes the techniques employed and the problems encountered in this work and gives a list of SETI observing programmes carried out from 1959 to 1984.

The diverse opinions and arguments advanced by contributors to this book show that the question of ETI is far from simple. They can be contrasted with the generally naive and simplistic remarks on the subject which appear in much of the UFO literature. Every ufologist should obtain a copy - it is to be hoped that the publishers will decide to issue a more moderately priced paperback edition. J.H.

McCLENON, James. *Deviant Science; the case of Parapsychology*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

This is a very valuable study of the interactions of parapsychology and its critics, the processes by which parapsychology is labelled as deviant, and the methods by which

parapsychologists cope with the situation.

McClenon adopts the following thesis: science has evolved a basic metaphysics about which sort of phenomena can exist, and the methods by which they can be studied - 'scientism'; various anomalistic phenomena fail to meet the required scientific standard and are rejected; studies of them are not permitted to be published in scientific journals.

Scientists engage in a political and rhetorical process which labels these phenomena, and the beliefs surrounding them, as 'deviant', and stigmatises those scientists who continue to research in these areas. Those scientists can maintain a stable relationship with orthodox science by increasing their adherence to scientific rules and ideology. Parapsychology tends to adopt a position of being 'more scientific than the scientists', and itself creates barriers against dramatic spontaneous phenomena.

In Chapter 2, McClenon gives as examples of anomalous phenomena, meteorites, N-rays, continental drift, biological memory transfer and ball-lightning. He makes the important point that whether an anomalous light is treated as ball-lightning or a psychic light often depends entirely on the context. Ball-lightning studies maintain their scientific reputation by ignoring this. The biological memory transfer researchers did not help their case by calling their journal 'The Worm Runner' and including humorous articles.

In subsequent chapters McClenon discusses strategies by which parapsychologists seek to increase their scientific legitimacy, and the strategies of sceptics. He looks at the 'politics' of parapsychology, including the AAAS parapsychology controversy and attempts to have parapsychological articles published in scientific journals. There are the results of a questionnaire sent out to 'elite' scientists in the AAAS in 1981 - over 70% expressed sceptical viewpoints (twice as many as in other recent surveys).

In his conclusions, McClenon suggests that pending major changes in social ideology or scientific paradigms, parapsychology is likely to remain marginal. Psychic research, however, may become respectable by becoming a type of folklore study, and Hufford's study of the 'Hag' is held up as an example.

This study is very U.S.-oriented: the SPR in Britain has never wholly given itself over to scientific ideology. The classics, public school, Oxbridge elite has always found 'anti-materialism' useful in its struggle against the materialism useful in its struggle against the industrial-technological bourgeoisie. However, there is no doubt that this is an excellent study, with many valuable insights, and should be read by all Magonia readers. P.R.